

NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHIVAL
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United Methodist Church

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In her article "Untrod Paths" in our 1985 publication, Frances Lawrie Noll told the stories of several pioneer women preachers in our Annual Conference. In this issue of The Circuit Writer we are pleased to add the story of Dr. Maud Keister Jensen. Although Dr. Jensen is an elder in the Central Pennsylvania Conference, she has a long association with Northern New Jersey, and is presently retired, living in Madison, N.J. The article is a brief excerpt from an interview by Naomi R. Kooker in April, 1984 for the Women's History Project of the United Methodist Church. The complete oral history tape and transcript are on file at the United Methodist Archives Center at Drew University.

I was born in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, which is a west shore town right across the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, the capital of the state... My mother was a member of the Methodist Church in our home town, so of course I became a member of the Methodist Church... I taught Sunday School from the time I was twelve years old.

(In January, 1925, while a student at Bucknell University) I decided very definitely that I needed a license to preach. I had decided to become a missionary... So I did get my license there. You're licensed in the local church. The terminology is different now, but the general effect and way of doing things is the same. I had the examination in front of the congregation with the District Superintendent and the pastor. I was happy to be licensed to preach, so I could have that qualification to take with me to the mission field.

I went in to New York in April (1926) and met the committee (of the Board of Missions). They were looking for someone at the time to go to Korea to work as treasurer because the missionary who was doing that work was due for furlough, and overdue, and there was no one else who could do that kind of work. And here I was, trained in business... They wanted to get someone on the field as quickly as possible so that this missionary and his family could come home. So this was April... (and) universities ran into June... but the professors all seemed to be perfectly willing to let me go. As a matter of fact, only one even suggested an exam and he asked me to make out the questions.... (My) Commencement day I arrived in Japan.

After being evacuated from Korea... I stayed at Drew from 1941 to 1946 during which time I first got my Masters of Arts degree and then my Bachelor of Divinity degree... Then I stayed on another year to finish my Ph.D. studies and to take my comprehensive examination (in systematic theology).

My husband Kris had gone back to Korea in May of 1946, (but) women were not allowed to go out at first (so) there was nothing to do but wait until 1948... Since I was going back... I felt that it would be wise to be ordained so that... I should be able also to have the right to baptise and to hold the communion services... I was ordained deacon (in May, 1948) with my husband standing by me to support me just as the wives stood by their husbands who were also getting ordained. Since he could not be with me and was not with me when I got my elder's ordination, I'm very glad he was with me at that time.

The Korean Conflict took Kris a prisoner from the first day, along with several others; and most of us were evacuated to Japan. From there I returned to the States in 1951, speaking far and wide about the war and church conditions in Korea and preparing to return to the field in 1953 when happily Kris was returned.

In May, 1956, the General Conference passed the enabling act that permitted fully ordained and prepared women to belong to annual conferences on the same basis as men, and I was immediately accepted by the Central Pennsylvania Conference in which I had been ordained as soon as it met, right after the General Conference. So on May 18, 1956, I had the honor of becoming the first woman in our American Methodism to receive full clergy rights... Since my ordination was recognised fully by the Korean Methodist Church, which did admit women after 1930 when it became independent, and I was a full member there, Bishop Oxnam felt all requirements had been met, and I was admitted without further question. As I was in Korea with my husband at the time, I learned of my acceptance through an article in the military paper, The Stars and Stripes...

(I was) grateful for the personal honor, and it seemed only right that at long last the equality of men and women in the ministry should be recognised in this way. At first, only a few women followed, but gradually more and more females opted for freedom to become ministers for Christ, until today almost half of the incoming students in seminaries may be women--older women, divorced women, women who have experience that can be invaluable in leading a church. The whole attitude of the church has changed in many ways... I have been proud that I have been accepted, but not with the pride of position, but only that others have been willing to judge me fit. I never doubted that it was right and suitable for me to pursue these ends, and in the same way I have no doubt that others are equally entitled to these rights.

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Maud Jensen has received the Alumna of the Year Award from Shippensburg College and Bucknell University, an honorary D.D. from Lycoming College, an honorary L.H.D. from Drew University in 1977, and, in 1978 her Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Drew University. She has also served as an elected delegate to the Korean General Conference.

PASTORS AND HISTORIANS

This year's annual Archives and History publication will be devoted to the unique recollections of our churches. We're working on the theme: Skeletons in the Church Closet, and are asking you to drag out or dig up one or two amusing or unique stories that come from your church's history. We are looking for the kind of thing that doesn't go in the formal local church history, but does reflect the times in which our churches have served or are serving. Pastors may know of incidents from former churches served.

Examples of the kind of anecdotes we have in mind can be found in the blue Conference Centennial History published in 1957 chapter four on pages 161-201 (especially pages 193-201).

Wont you help us? Write up your stories. Keep them short, and get them to Rev. Robert Simpson 20 Oak Dr. Chatham, N.J. 07928 by January 1st.

Bill Noll, Bob Simpson, Connie Brewer

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Frank Dennis, our Society is renewing its efforts to preserve the recollections of its retired pastors. Dr. Dennis will be recording taped interviews with several retired clergy during the coming year. These tapes will be stored along with written transcripts in our Conference Archives and will be available to interested researchers.

Once again we urge each one of our retired (or soon-to-be) clergy to send a tape of a favorite sermon you have preached to the archives for preservation. We need volunteers to help transcribe the tapes. Willing typists should contact The Rev. William Noll at 239-5762



LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY CONTEST

Each year a few local churches in our conference will decide to celebrate their congregation's heritage by publishing a local church history. And each year the Historical and Archival Society honors two of the outstanding publications with its Local Church History Awards. In 1985, awards were presented at Annual Conference to the Basking Ridge and New City for their marvelous church histories.

If your church has recently published a history, please send a copy to Dr. Kenneth Rowe, United Methodist Archives Center, P.O. Box 127, Madison, New Jersey 07940 for consideration for our 1986 awards. The volume will then become a part of the permanent collection at the Archives.